

In sub-Saharan Africa, domestic and international migration to African countries prevails over overseas migration. Due to the region's large rural population and the ongoing urbanization process, rural–urban migration is a prominent feature, although it actually coexists with renewed, diverse and contrasted other patterns, including rural–rural, urban–rural and circular migration. These migration dynamics reshape national and regional spaces, crafting new territorial dynamics.

INTRA-AFRICAN MIGRATION PREVAILS

In 2015, about 33 million Africans were living outside their home countries, although more than half of these international migrants moved within Africa. However, this figure masks sharp differences: while North Africans migrate overseas (90%), sub-Saharan Africans move mostly within Africa (nearly 75%), to neighbouring countries or within their region. Western and Eastern Africa are the most dynamic regions in terms of sending and receiving countries. With about 5.7 and 3.6 million intra-regional migrants in 2015 – 97% and 67%, respectively – they exemplify SSA's strong intra-regional dynamics, with leading hosting countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia. They also highlight the role of regional economic communities which adopted regulations facilitating the free movement of people, although the right to reside and work remains controlled. To a lesser extent, Western and Eastern Africa also send migrants to and receive migrants from other African regions.

These continental dynamics might even be stronger as international data neither include the significant intra-African unrecorded migration nor the dynamics of circular or non-residential migration between countries. If African migration is partly facilitated by free circulation regimes, it is also linked to the porous nature of borders that facilitates the movement of people and informal cross-border trade. Overall, the importance of circular migration results from the development over time of social and family networks supported by improved infrastructure and communication networks.

Further, the evidence from a diversity of countries, though limited, suggests that internal migration is very substantial and might even be the dominant migration pattern across SSA. It represents about 80% of migration in Nigeria and Uganda, 50% in Kenya and Senegal, and 38% in Burkina Faso, which has a specific historical relation with the bordering Côte d'Ivoire. This supports global estimates that consider the number of people moving internally as being six times greater than those who have emigrated.

DIFFERENTIATED SIZE AND PATTERNS OF RURAL AND URBAN MIGRATION

In line with SSA still growing and dominant rural population, in the five selected countries, the majority of migrants originate from rural areas, particularly in Uganda (85%) and Burkina Faso (93%). Quite urbanised Nigeria is an exception with 55% of migrants coming from urban areas, while urban–urban migration ranges from 3% to 18% in the other countries. Further, the rural and urban migration patterns present quite contrasted features. Reflecting the urbanization process of the region, in all these countries but Burkina Faso (where the connection to Côte d'Ivoire prevails), rural migrants principally move to national cities. In Nigeria though, rural–urban internal migration is just behind dominant internal urban–urban flows. Regarding international migration, rural dwellers generally migrate to other African countries, either to rural or urban areas, as it is the case in Burkina Faso where rural migration is mostly directed to rural Côte d'Ivoire and its vibrant cocoa sector. By contrast, urban migrants move, overall, to other continents and urban areas.

Nevertheless, the scale of migration flows between rural and urban areas, as well as the widespread rapid urbanization across the region can be questioned. Census data based analyses show that, although some countries continue to urbanize very rapidly, urbanization pace has reduced. The explanation lies in the post-1980 structural adjustment programs that lessened the income gap between rural and urban areas that had been driving net rural–urban migration. Today, in the context of limited formal employment, broad precarious informal sector, and limited safety nets faced by most of the countries, important parts of urban livelihoods are also vulnerable and lack resilience. Such livelihood vulnerability has led to increased propensity for mobility, not just into towns, but out of them as well. Particularly, there are important indications of increasing circular migration, or reduced in-migration to cities. Livelihoods are not the only factor impacting circular migration. Rural–urban linkages in SSA are also embedded within strong social, cultural and political dimensions. Circular

migration tends to affect the net rate of in-migration to urban areas, explaining why SSA's urbanization is rising more slowly in some countries, with most of the growth coming from urban natural increase.

Rural–rural migration also contributes to population redistribution in many countries. In 2010, this flow constituted about 1/3 of the internal movements of people in Burkina Faso and Uganda. Rural–rural migration can arise when land access is possible and when new activities develop, such as in artisanal mining. They can reflect the extension of the agricultural frontier, and also be associated with crises and changes in environmental factors. However, most often, rural–rural migration results from limited employment opportunities in cities. Rural migration to other regions within the country or in neighbouring countries is often linked with the economics of important cash-crop production areas (e.g. cotton, groundnut, cocoa, coffee and also rice) that offer employment opportunities to a large number of workers.

MIGRATION IS SHAPING NEW TERRITORIAL DYNAMICS

Overall, migration in Africa has become a more complex and diverse process. This migration creates new functional spaces that are shaped by social and economic networks. Renewed and diversified migration patterns have thrived over the last decades between capital cities, small and regional towns, and their rural hinterlands. These dynamics witness the blurring of limits between rural and urban spaces and livelihoods, and the growing importance of rural–urban linkages, thus portraying a new African rurality. The static “rural” and “urban” categories no longer capture the mixed lifestyles and socio-economic behaviours related to the intensifying rural–urban relations. However, public policies fail to recognize the spatial and occupational complexity of rural and urban livelihoods. Migration supports the diversification of households' livelihoods and access to employment opportunities, even when temporary. It strengthens the role of small towns and intermediate cities, as well as local and regional dynamics. This new territorial reality, shaped by migration, must be a matter of concern for public policies, which should facilitate a better match of policy actions with local needs.

Fig. 2.1: Rural and urban migration by destination (selected countries)

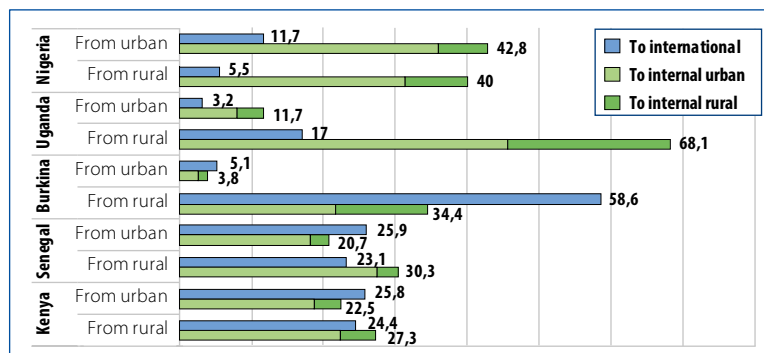


Fig. 2.2: Intra-Africa and overseas international migration (2015)

